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Senate

LILLY LEDBETTER FAIR PAY ACT

Mr. TESTER. Thank you, Mr. President.

I thank the Senator from Maryland for her leadership on this issue. This is a critically important issue in this country today.

I would also like to welcome the Senator from New Mexico in the Chair. It is good to see you there.

Mr. President, I rise today in support of the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act. It is a fair, commonsense piece of legislation that honors the hard work and dedication of a great Montanan, that Montanan being Jeannette Rankin, who was America's first Congresswoman, an outspoken peace activist and a champion of equal rights.

Congresswoman Rankin would have voted yes today because she fought so hard for equality and fairness.

Every employee deserves to earn the same pay for doing the same work, regardless of artificial timelines. Lilly Ledbetter worked at Goodyear Tire Company for 19 years, and she discovered she was being paid significantly less than her male colleagues for doing the exact same amount of work. A jury agreed. The jury awarded Ms. Ledbetter significant—significant—damages. The U.S. Supreme Court said too much time had passed since

her first paycheck, and the Court ruled that Ms. Ledbetter's claim was invalid and even took away that jury award. Thankfully, this legislation undoes that wrongheaded decision. It clarifies the law to make it fair to America's workers.

When he signed the original Equal Pay Act in 1963, President Kennedy said protecting America's workers against pay discrimination is "basic to democracy." Forty-six years after President Kennedy signed that historic piece of bipartisan legislation, American women still make only 77 cents for every dollar a man makes for doing the same work. African-American workers make 18 percent less, while Latinos make 28 percent less for doing the same work. American Indians make even less.

Nearly 100 years after Jeannette Rankin came to Congress, we cannot ignore this kind of discrimination. We have a duty to speak out against pay discrimination and to make sure the law is clear. Hard-working Americans deserve nothing less than equal pay for equal work.

Mr. President, I urge all my colleagues to pass the Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act.

With that, I yield the floor.